

# Statoil's Arctic program, Bear Island nature reserve and the ice edge

May 12, 2014

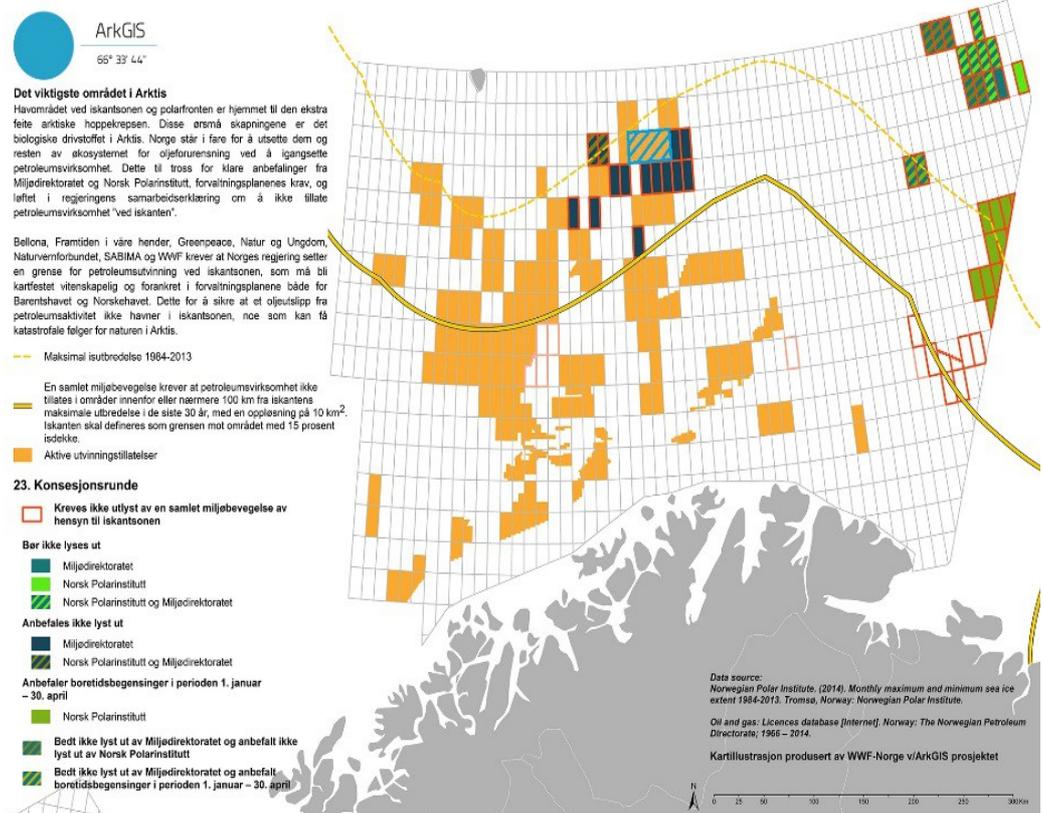
## Media Brief

**WHAT:** Statoil is preparing to drill the northernmost well ever drilled on the Norwegian continental shelf, in the controversial Hoop area of the Barents Sea. The drilling program is part of Statoil's aggressive push north further into the Arctic and threatens both the Bear Island nature reserve and the vulnerable ice edge.

Statoil's own oil spill analysis shows an oil spill during the month of May could hit the Bear Island nature reserve in less than one week. Vast distances, darkness, extreme cold and ice formation make most oil spill equipment useless in these regions and oil trapped under the ice would be impossible to clean up.

Last year's plans to search for oil in the area were delayed because Statoil was not properly equipped for Arctic conditions. There is little indication the company will be any better prepared this year.

**WHERE:** The northernmost oil well, Apollo, is located 175 km south-east from the Bear Island nature reserve. This is about 305 km from the closest mainland point of Nordkapp and 306 km from Hammerfest. The Hoop area is about 50 km north



of the PL537 finding at Wisting, the former northernmost drilling point on the Norwegian Continental Shelf. The water depth of the well is 444m.

### WHAT'S AT RISK:



**BEAR ISLAND:** Most of Bear Island is a nature reserve, including the surrounding waters up to twelve nautical miles from the island. The island is home to one of the largest sea bird colonies in the Northern Hemisphere, with an estimated one million seabirds gathered during nesting season. It is also home to mosses, lichens and other plants, as well as arctic foxes and polar bears during winter<sup>1</sup>.

Most of the Arctic's whale and seal species are found around Bear Island including white-beaked dolphins, minke whales, ringed seals, harp seals, hooded seals, harbour seals and walruses. These unique species and the local seabird populations depend on the significant fish stocks found around the island for their survival.



**THE ICE EDGE:** The ice edge zone is where the open ocean meets sea ice. It is one of the most important living and feeding areas for species like capelin, polar cod, polar bears, ringed seals, narwhal, beluga whale and the Greenland whale<sup>4</sup>. Norwegian regulations do not allow oil drilling in ice covered waters - it is simply too difficult to clean up. The Hoop field is located in open water, however oil spill modelling by the Norwegian Meteorological Institute for Greenpeace shows an oil

spill from the Hoop area could reach the ice edge in no more than 14 days<sup>2</sup> inevitably damaging this vulnerable area.

Planktonic blooms at the ice edge are a vital food source in Arctic waters. Blooms take place from April through to July, which means they will coincide with the first drilling period of the Apollo and Atlantis wells.

### DRIFT TIME AND OIL RECOVERY

**OPERATIONS (ORO):** Statoil's own oil spill analysis shows oil could hit the Bear Island nature reserve in less than a week. Norwegian regulations do not allow oil drilling in ice covered waters

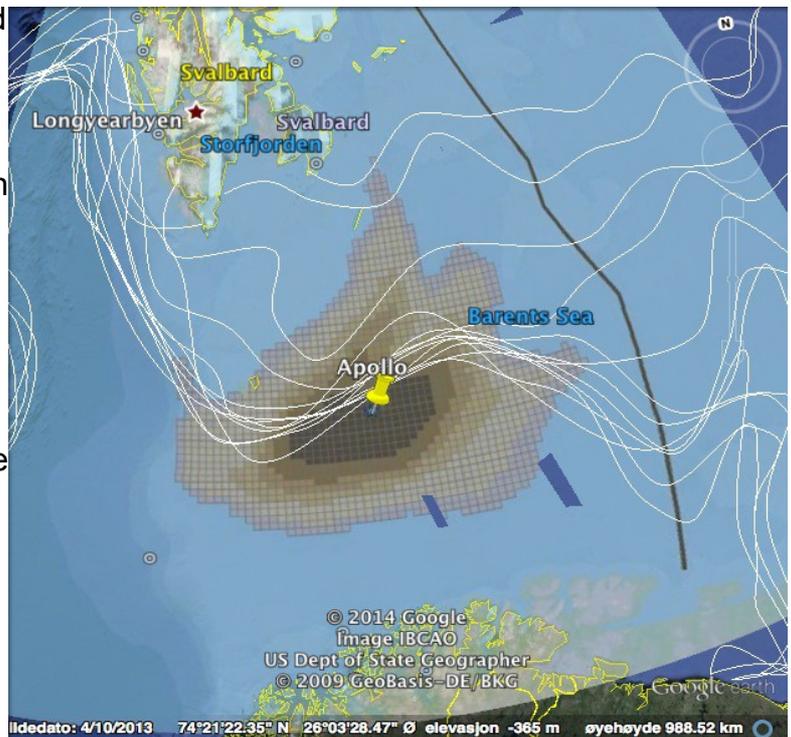
because the expertise and technology required for oil spill cleanup in these difficult areas do not exist. Yet the potential spread of oil from the drill site, as illustrated by the spill modelling, leads to the very consequences these regulations seek to avoid.

In their drilling application, Statoil stated that an oil spill would not affect the bulk of the polar bear population, just a few unlucky polar bears should they happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. The oil spill modelling suggests otherwise, showing a spill in the Hoop area could drift inside of what the Norwegian Polar Institute defines as the 'ice edge zone'<sup>1</sup>, rendering the regulations useless.

The inadequacy of authorities to deal with a small spill is especially



In January 2011 the tanker Godafoss ran aground leaking oil outside Hvaler, two hours from Oslo. This was a small spill, not a full blowout, and the conditions in a quiet Norwegian fjord in January are nowhere near as extreme as in the Arctic. Still, cold, darkness and ice cover prevented the coast guard from effectively handling the spill and in the end they were forced to use shovels and buckets to scrape the worst of the oil off the ice.



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.npolar.no/no/fakta/iskantsonen.html>

concerning when considering the challenges the oil industry will encounter in Arctic waters: long distances for oil recovery operations, long periods of darkness, 13 meter waves, fog, iced equipment, sudden changes in weather, low temperatures and the presence of ice in the ocean. There are no efficient and effective ways to remove oil from the ice and there are no reliable plans for cleaning up an oil spill around Bear Island and the ice edge.

Oil exploration in the world's most remote and extreme environments like the Arctic not only pose a threat to the unique species that live there, continued fossil fuel expansion is a threat to our planet and all life that depends on it. The International Energy Agency (IEA) has identified that 2/3 of all proven fossil fuels must stay in the ground to avoid dangerous climate change. Arctic oil is extremely risky to extract and the impact of an accident would be very severe, which offers a strong justification for leaving this source of oil in the ground.

**STATOIL AS AN OPERATOR IN THE ARCTIC:** Statoil is heavily invested in Arctic drilling, being the only operator to secure licenses in all the Arctic countries (USA, Norway, Canada, Denmark (Greenland) and Russia). Statoil is currently involved in projects in ice-filled waters that would never be allowed in Norwegian waters. Even the heavily criticized Dutch company Shell suspended its January 2014 drilling plans in the Arctic for the 2014 summer after political pressure and a court decision in the federal court of Alaska.

The Arctic is Statoil's flagship project; the company has created its own Arctic unit. There is no



other company in the world present in this many areas in and around the Arctic Ocean.

<sup>1</sup><http://snl.no/Bj%C3%B8rn%C3%B8ya>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.greenpeace.org/norway/no/nyheter/2013/Statoil-utslipp-kan-ga-rett-i-iskanten/>

<sup>3</sup>*Søknad om tillatelse til virksomhet etter forurensningsloven ved boring av letebrønn 7324/2-1 Apollo*

<sup>4</sup><http://www.npolar.no/npcms/export/sites/np/no/nyheter/vedlegg/konsesjonsrunde-04-04-2014.pdf>

<sup>5</sup>[www.savethearctic.org](http://www.savethearctic.org)

<sup>6</sup>[http://www.nrk.no/norge/\\_-hald-olje-og-gass-unna-bjornoya-1.7767365](http://www.nrk.no/norge/_-hald-olje-og-gass-unna-bjornoya-1.7767365) [17.04.14 kl. 02:33]